

For Immediate Release: October 17, 2016

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Chesapeake Music Teacher Toney McNair Jr. Named 2017 Virginia Teacher of the Year

RICHMOND, Va. — Toney Lee McNair Jr., a choral music teacher at Indian River Middle School in Chesapeake, was named 2017 Virginia Teacher of the Year Monday evening during a recognition ceremony at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond. McNair was selected from eight regional winners announced in September and will be the commonwealth's nominee for 2017 National Teacher of the Year.

"I am so excited, honored, thrilled and humbled — all of that rolled into one," McNair said after learning of his selection. "It is a thrill to represent the commonwealth and represent all of the teachers who are working hard in the trenches every day."

McNair, the Region 2 Teacher of the Year, was selected as the state's top teacher after being interviewed by a committee that included representatives of professional and educational associations, the business community, and 2016 Virginia Teacher of the Year Natalie DiFusco-Funk of Salem. McNair's selection was announced by Secretary of Education Dietra Y. Trent and Superintendent of Public Instruction Steven R. Staples.

McNair is a 17-year veteran of the classroom and is in his 11th year as a choral teacher at Indian River Middle. He earned his Bachelor of Science from Norfolk State University and a Master of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry from Virginia Union University. He is currently pursuing a Master of Education in administration and supervision at Averett University.

The other seven 2017 Virginia Regional Teachers of the Year, who were also honored during the ceremony, are as follows:

- Louise Thornton, a government teacher at Prince George High in Prince George County (Region 1)
- Carolyn Kleinert, a Spanish teacher at Freedom Middle in Spotsylvania County (Region 3)
- Heidi Trude, a French teacher at Skyline High in Warren County (Region 4)
- Crystal DeLong, a social studies teacher at Liberty High in Bedford County (Region 5)
- Jason Ince, an agricultural education teacher at Chatham High in Pittsylvania County (Region 6)
- Beth Shell, an agricultural education teacher at Lee County Career and Technical Center in Lee County (Region 7)
- Katie McCann, a language arts and reading teacher at Appomattox Elementary in Appomattox County (Region 8)

As the 2017 Virginia Teacher of the Year, McNair received a \$5,000 award and a commemorative ring from the Apple Federal Credit Union Education Foundation; a \$2,500 award from Richmond law firm Allen, Allen, Allen & Allen; educational opportunities from several public and private colleges and universities; flowers from Coleman Brothers Flowers Inc.; an engraved plaque from Bunkie Trinite Trophies Inc.; a gift basket from C.F. Sauer Company; and an engraved crystal apple.

The 2017 National Teacher of the Year will be announced next spring at a White House ceremony. Two previous Virginia teachers — B. Philip Bigler, the 1998 Virginia Teacher of the Year, and Mary V. Bicouvaris, the 1989 Virginia Teacher of the Year — went on to be named as a National Teacher of the Year.

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